



UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM — MINORITY STAFF
SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION
MAY 2006

THE GROWTH OF POLITICAL APPOINTEES IN THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

PREPARED FOR

REP. HENRY A. WAXMAN

REP. DANNY K. DAVIS

REP. MAJOR R. OWENS

REP. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

REP. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

REP. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

[UPDATED MAY 3, 2006]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Purpose of the Report.....	2
Background and Methodology.....	2
The Civil Service System.....	2
The Central Personnel Data File	4
Findings.....	5
The Number of Political Appointees Has Increased Under the Bush Administration	5
The Number of Minority Appointees Has Declined Under the Bush Administration	6
The Number of Female Appointees Has Declined Under the Bush Administration.....	7
There is Evidence of a Decline in the Quality of Appointees in the Bush Administration	8
Conclusion	10

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In his own words, President George W. Bush “ran on making sure we don’t grow the size of Government.” President Bush also pledged to assemble an “administration that reflects the diversity of our country.”

At the request of Reps. Waxman, Davis, Owens, Norton, Cummings, and Van Hollen, this report analyzes the President’s adherence to these commitments in the facet of government hiring over which the President has the most control: the hiring of political appointees. It reaches a surprising finding: rather than reduce the number of political appointees in government, the Bush Administration has sharply increased them. Political appointees have also become significantly more white and more male under the Bush Administration.

The report finds:

- **The Bush Administration has expanded the number of political appointees in the federal government.** In the President’s first five years in office, over 300 new political appointees have been added to the federal payroll. The number of “Schedule C” political appointees, who are hired without congressional approval, has increased by over 400, from 1,229 in 2000 to 1,640 in 2005, an increase of 33%.
- **The Bush Administration has favored white males in its political appointments.** Since 2000, the Administration has added 585 white political appointees to the federal government, while reducing the number of minority political appointees by 274. As a result, there has been a 50% decline in the proportion of minority political appointees serving in the federal government. The trends are similar for female political appointees. The proportion of women holding political appointments has dropped by 20% under the Bush Administration.
- **The Bush Administration has reversed progress made during the Clinton Administration.** During the Clinton Administration, the overall number of political appointees dropped by 17%; the proportion of female political appointees increased from 42% to 45%; and the proportion of minority political appointees increased from 12% to 26%. All three trends have been reversed in the Bush Administration.

The effect of these changes on the operation of government is difficult to assess. It appears, however, that there has been a decline in the qualifications of many political appointees. High-profile examples of unqualified employees include Michael Brown, who was appointed to head FEMA with robust political connections, but scant emergency management experience. There are also many less well-known examples of unqualified individuals appointed to high government posts.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

President Bush came into office promising to reduce the size of the federal government. As he said after the 2000 election, he “ran on making sure we didn’t grow the size of Government. The idea is to make Government more effective and more efficient so we can do our job.”¹ According to the President, one of the “values that I hold dear to my heart” is “limiting the size and scope of government.”²

President Bush has also stated his commitment to building a diverse administration. Women and minorities have been historically underrepresented in the federal workforce, as well as among political appointees, and President Bush promised to address this problem. In 2002, President Bush said: “One of my jobs is to put together an administration that is talented, an administration here to serve the country, not themselves, an administration that reflects the diversity of our country. And I’m doing just that.”³ Two years later, President Bush praised the diversity of his political appointees as an example for minority employment: “We’ve got a diverse cabinet. I’ve got a diverse administration. Hopefully, that sets an example for people when it comes to hiring.”⁴

The objective of this report is to examine whether President Bush has adhered to these commitments in his political appointments, the area of government over which the President exercises the most direct control.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Civil Service System

The civilian governmental workforce is divided into two types of employees: career civil service employees who are hired based on a competitive merit-based system and political appointees who are hired at the discretion of the President and his agency heads.⁵

¹ President Bush, *Remarks at Oak Park High School in Kansas City, Missouri* (June 17, 2002).

² President Bush, *Remarks at a Fundraiser for Representative Tom Lantham in Des Moines, Iowa* (Mar. 4, 2002).

³ President Bush, *Remarks at a Reception for Hispanic Heritage Month* (Oct. 14, 2002).

⁴ President Bush, *Remarks to the UNITY: Journalists of Color Convention* (Aug. 6, 2004).

⁵ Civilian employees in selected agencies, primarily those related to intelligence, law-enforcement, foreign service, and the postal service, are excepted by law from the competitive hiring rules. This class of federal employee is known collectively as the

The merit-based civil service was created in 1883 by the Pendleton Act in order to limit the President's power to fill government positions with personal and political cronies. It was designed to end the political spoils system that had previously corrupted government employment and to ensure continuity and expertise in governmental operations across presidential administrations. Under the civil service system, career government employees are hired under a competitive hiring process, based on carefully selected qualifications.⁶ There are an estimated 1.8 million civil servants, in positions ranging from unskilled labor to high-level management, working in the federal government.⁷

Political appointees form the other major layer of the civilian employee system. Political appointees occupy senior management and other policy-making positions. They are responsible for ensuring that the actions of the executive agencies are coordinated with presidential priorities. While hiring for civil service positions is based on a competitive model, the authority to hire political appointees rests solely with the President and his agency heads.

There are four primary types of political appointees:

- **Confirmed presidential appointees.** These are appointees that (1) hold high offices specified by law and (2) whose appointments are required by law to be confirmed by the Senate.
- **Nonconfirmed presidential appointees.** These are appointees that also hold high offices specified by law, but whose appointments do not require Senate confirmation.
- **Political Senior Executive Service (SES) appointees.** These are political appointees who are selected in a noncompetitive manner to fill positions that have been reserved for members of the Senior Executive Service.⁸
- **Schedule C appointees.** These are appointees who hold policy-related positions that are established at the discretion of the President and the agency heads.⁹

“excepted service.” Though they do not adhere to the governmentwide hiring rules, agencies within the excepted service generally establish their own rules for competitive hiring.

⁶ 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(1)

⁷ Office of Personnel Management, *The Fact Book, Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics* (Oct. 2004).

⁸ The career Senior Executive Service has a unique set of qualification and competition standards. See Office of Personnel Management, *Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications* (Jan. 1998). The political SES appointees are part of the SES system, but are appointed by the agency head, not selected through the competition standards applicable to the career SES.

⁹ The analysis does not include ambassadors or appointees to federal advisory committees.

The majority of political appointees in modern administrations have been Schedule C appointees. These officials are exempt from the government's competitive hiring practices because they are considered to have "policy determining responsibilities" or to "serve in a confidential relationship to a key official."¹⁰ Federal agencies may increase their Schedule C slots with the approval of the Director of the Office of Personnel Management.¹¹ Schedule C employees are typically appointed by the head of the agency in which they serve.

Because the positions that may be filled by Schedule C appointees are created at the discretion of the incumbent administration, the ranks of Schedule C appointees are able to expand or contract between years and administrations. Currently, Schedule C appointees account for more than half of all political appointees.

The Central Personnel Data File

This analysis of trends in political hiring under the Bush Administration is based on data from the Central Personnel Data File (CPDF). The CPDF is a database of federal employees that is compiled and maintained by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). CPDF data was obtained from OPM for all years between 1989 through 2005.

The information recorded in the CPDF indicates the specific type of appointment and pay characteristics for each employee. This information was compiled in the report to assess aggregate numbers of political appointees, the type of their appointments, and trends over time.¹²

The CPDF data has several important limitations. It does not include data from most offices within the White House or from important intelligence-related agencies, such as the Central Intelligence Agency.¹³ As a result, the findings in this report are likely to underestimate the total number of appointed individuals in the executive branch.

¹⁰ Office of Personnel Management, *Presidential Transition Guide to Federal Human Resources Management Matters* (Jan. 2005).

¹¹ House Committee on Government Reform, *United States Government: Policy and Supporting Positions*, Appendix No. 3, Schedule C Positions (Nov. 22, 2004).

¹² The specific part of the CPDF examined in this report is the CPDF Status File, a series of quarterly snapshots of the civilian federal workforce.

¹³ Office of Personnel Management, *The Guide to Personnel Data Standards* (Nov. 4, 2005).

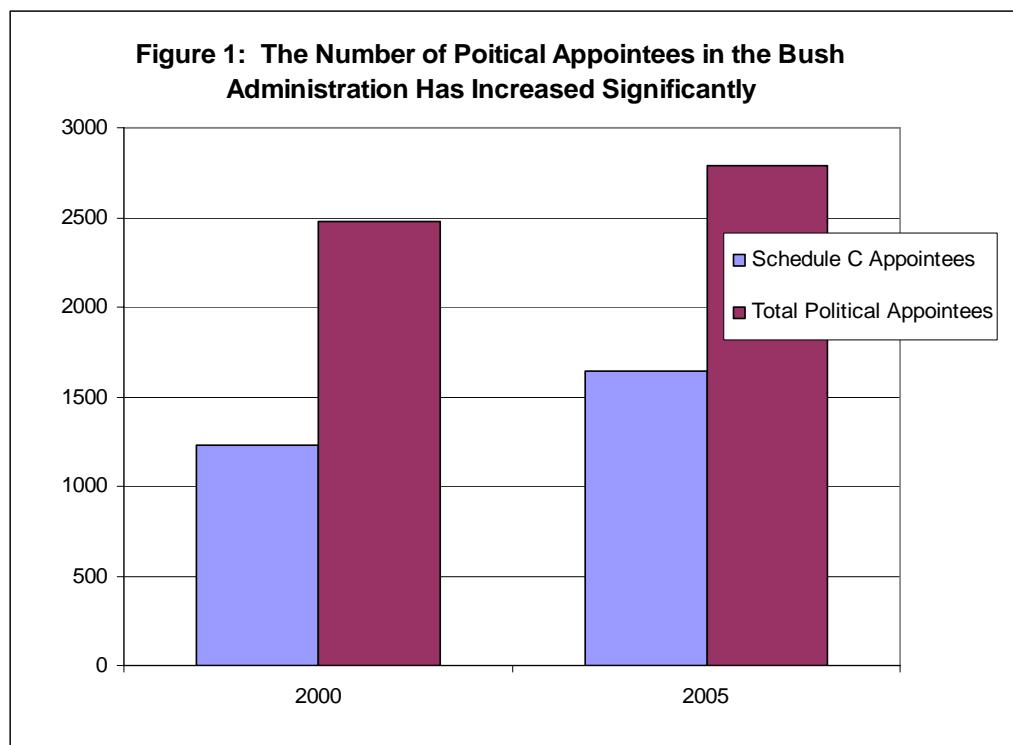
FINDINGS

The Number of Political Appointees Has Increased Under the Bush Administration

Over the last five years, the Bush Administration has added hundreds of political appointees to the federal government. These increases reverse significant reductions in political appointees that occurred during the Clinton Administration.

In 2000, the year before President Bush took office, there were 2,479 political appointees. In 2005, there were 2,786 such appointees. In the first five years of the Bush Administration, the number of political appointees has risen by 307, a 12% increase. See Figure 1.

Two different trends underlie these overall changes in the composition of the political appointee workforce. There have been slight declines in the number of presidential appointees and political SES appointees, apparently due to an increase in vacancies and delays in the confirmation process. This has been more than offset, however, by a surge in the number of Schedule C appointees, who are appointed without confirmation or oversight. In 2000, there were 1,229 Schedule C political appointees in the executive branch. By 2005, the number had ballooned to 1,640 such appointees. In the first five years of the Bush Administration, the number of Schedule C political appointees has risen by 411, an increase of 33%.



The overall increase in political appointees — and the rapid increase in Schedule C appointments — reverse the gains made during the Clinton Administration in reducing the size of the political workforce. Over the eight years of the Clinton Administration, President Clinton succeeded in reducing the number of political appointees from 3,029 in 1992 before he took office to 2,479 in 2000 when he left, an 18% drop. During this period, the number of Schedule C appointees declined by 447, a 27% reduction.

The Number of Minority Political Appointees Has Declined Under the Bush Administration

Despite overall increases in the number of political appointees under the Bush Administration, the number of minority political appointees has declined significantly under President Bush.

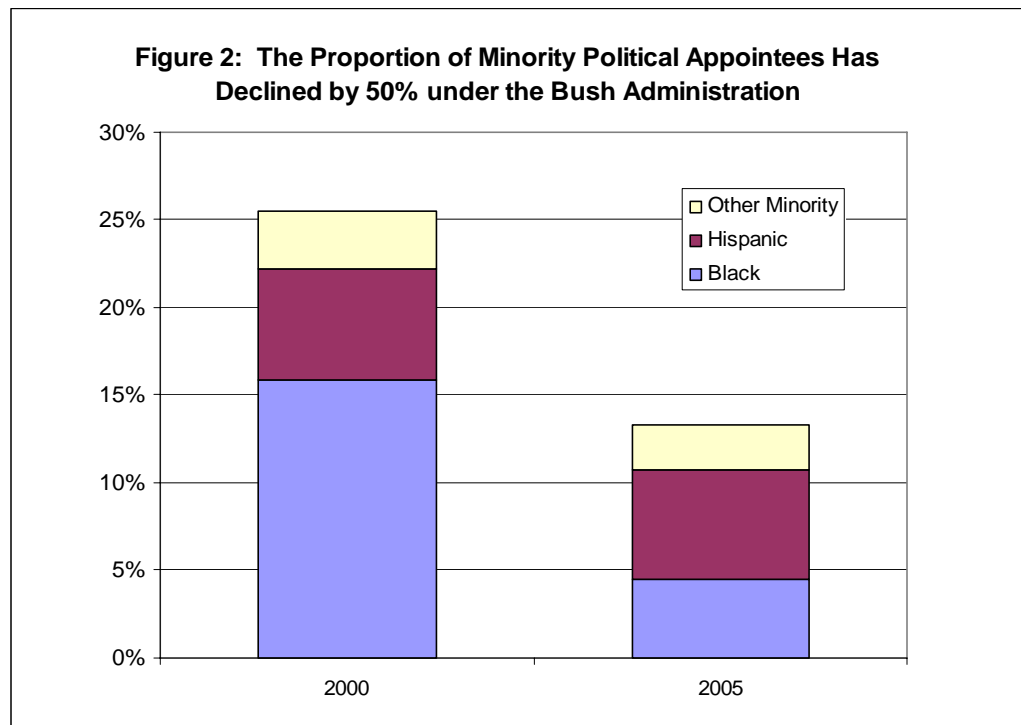
In the first five years that President Bush has been in office, the number of white political appointees serving in his Administration has increased by 585. At the same time, the number of minorities holding political appointments has dropped by 274. The result has been a sharp decline in the proportion of minority political appointees serving in the executive branch. In 2000, 26% of political appointees were minorities. By 2005, the proportion of minority appointees was cut in half to just 13%. See Figure 2.

Much of this decline in minority political appointments is due to a steep drop in black appointees, whose numbers fell by 69% between 2000 and 2005. As a proportion of all political appointees, black appointees fell from 16% to 4% between 2000 and 2005.

The decline in minority appointments reverses gains that were made during the Clinton Administration. During the Clinton Administration, the proportion of minority appointees more than doubled, increasing from 12% in 1992 to 26% in 2000. Over this same period, the proportion of black political appointees rose from 6% to 16%.

The drop in minority political appointees also contrasts with gains that minorities have made winning jobs through the competitive civil service. In 1993, minorities held 28% of federal civil service jobs. This percentage grew to 30% in 2000 and to 31% in 2003, the most recent year for which there is data.¹⁴

¹⁴ Office of Personnel Management, *The Fact Book, Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics* (Oct. 2004).

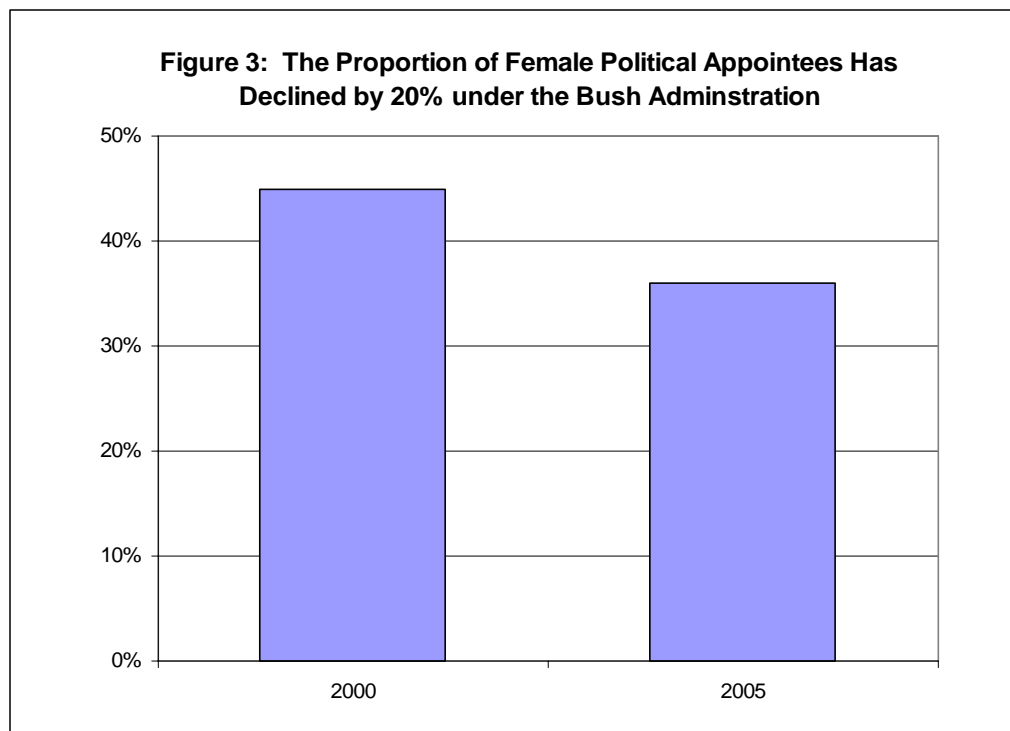


The Number of Female Political Appointees Has Declined under the Bush Administration

Despite overall increases in the number of political appointees under the Bush Administration, the number of female political appointees has also declined under President Bush.

In 2000, there were 1,125 female political appointees in the executive branch. By 2005, this number had fallen to 1,017. As a proportion of all political appointees, female appointees have declined from 45% of political appointees to 36% of appointees over this period. See Figure 3.

This decrease in female political appointees reverses gains made during the Clinton Administration. During the Clinton Administration, the proportion of female appointees increased from 42% in 1992 to 45% in 2000.



There Is Evidence of a Decline in the Quality of Political Appointees in the Bush Administration

There is no recognized metric for measuring the quality of political appointees. Nonetheless, there is evidence that there has been a decline in the qualifications of many political appointees serving in the Bush Administration.

One well-known example of a poorly qualified appointee is Michael Brown, the former Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Before his appointment to FEMA, Mr. Brown had little, if any, disaster management experience. In an earlier career, he was the commissioner of judges and stewards for the International Arabian Horse Association.¹⁵ Mr. Brown's long-time friend, the head of FEMA and manager of President Bush's 2000 campaign, Joe Allbaugh, arranged his appointment as FEMA's General Counsel in 2001. After only two years at FEMA, he was elevated to Director of FEMA, where he oversaw the catastrophic federal response to Hurricane Katrina.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Brown Pushed From Last Job: Horse Group: FEMA Chief Had to Be 'Asked to Resign'*, Boston Herald (Sep. 3, 2005).

¹⁶ Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, U.S. House of Representatives, *A Failure of Initiative* (Feb. 15, 2006).

There are numerous other instances of political appointees with suspect qualifications serving in the Bush Administration. Recent examples include:

- **Julie Myers**, who was nominated to be the Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement at DHS on June 30, 2005.¹⁷ Ms. Myers's previous employment at DHS was in a mid-level appointee position administering personnel issues. Ms. Myers has strong personal connections to the Administration: her uncle is General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and her husband is Chief of Staff at DHS.¹⁸ After bipartisan opposition to her nomination in the Senate, President Bush circumvented the confirmation process with a recess appointment on January 4, 2006.¹⁹
- **Kevin Warsh**, who was appointed to the Federal Reserve Board on January 27, 2006.²⁰ Unlike most other members of the Federal Reserve, Mr. Warsh, who is only 35 years old, is not a prominent academic in the field of economics. Instead, Mr. Warsh is a lawyer who has previously worked as an investment banker at the firm Morgan Stanley. Prior to his appointment to the Federal Reserve Board, Mr. Warsh held a staff position on the White House Council of Economic Advisers for several years.²¹ Mr. Warsh also has robust political connections. His father-in-law, Ronald Lauder, is a former ambassador during the Reagan Administration, who has donated over \$165,000 to the Republican party in the last five years.²²
- **Douglas Hoelscher**, who was appointed to be Executive Director of Homeland Security Advisory Committees at DHS on February 28, 2006.²³ Prior to his appointment, Mr. Hoelscher was a coordinator in the White House Office of Political Affairs and a staffer for the Republican National Committee during the 2004 election. Immediately prior to his appointment, he was the White House liaison for DHS, in charge of coordinating political appointments to that department.²⁴

Less attention is commonly focused on Schedule C appointees, but some of their qualifications have also been called into question. For example, a Schedule C appointee in NASA's public affairs department, George Deutsch, recently

¹⁷ The White House, *Nominations Sent to the Senate* (June 30, 2005).

¹⁸ *How Many Mike Browns Are Out There?*, Time Magazine (Sep. 25, 2005).

¹⁹ *Bush Appointments Avert Senate Battles*, Washington Post (Jan. 5, 2006).

²⁰ The White House, *Nominations Sent to the Senate* (Jan. 27, 2005).

²¹ *Bush's Nomination of Warsh to Fed Draws Criticism*, Bloomberg News (Feb. 10, 2006).

²² *Id*; *Another Suspect Bushie*, The New Republic (Mar. 6, 2006).

²³ Department of Homeland Security, *Press Release: DHS Names Executive Director for Homeland Security Advisory Committees* (Feb. 8, 2006).

²⁴ *Homeland Homies*, National Journal (Mar. 4, 2006).

provoked uproar among career officials because of his attempts to censor the agency's scientists. Mr. Deutsch, who was only 24 years old and had no relevant scientific training, attained his position after working on President Bush's reelection campaign. At NASA, Mr. Deutsch circulated a memo instructing senior scientists to refer to "the Big Bang" as a "theory," and he repeatedly attempted to restrict scientists' access to the media. He resigned after it was revealed that he had lied on his resume about even having graduated from college.²⁵

CONCLUSION

This analysis examines trends in political appointees. Despite the President's promises to reduce the size of government, the Bush Administration has added hundreds of political appointees to the federal payroll. At the same time, the diversity of the political workforce has declined, as the Administration's political appointments have favored white males over minorities and women.

²⁵ *A Young Bush Appointee Resigns His Post at NASA*, New York Times (Feb. 8, 2006).